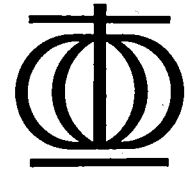


APRIL 1967

THIS IS A  
CALL TO PRAYER  
FOR  
THE LORD'S WORK  
IN  
COLOMBIA

# COLOMBIAN NEWS

NUMBER FORTY-SEVEN

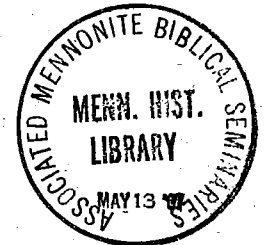


Cachipay, Cund., Colombia, S. A.

To All the World

INFORMATION SERVICE OF THE MENNONITE MISSION IN COLOMBIA

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## IBAGUE WORK MOVES FORWARD

Less than two years ago the Assembly of the Mennonite Churches of Colombia decided to open a new work in Ibague, capital of Tolima State. An invitation was extended to the Rev. and Mrs. Armando Hernandez, graduates of the seminary in Costa Rica, to initiate and organize the new work.

The Hernandez moved into a middle-class sector of Ibague. A large house was rented in which the garage has been used for worship services. The roof of the house has served as a classroom for the Sunday school classes.

Through personal contacts, house-to-house visitation, and evangelistic meetings, a small nucleus of Christians was formed and Sunday services began in the garage-sanctuary.

After six months of services, a converts' class was formed, and the Rev. Hernandez began Christian instruction for baptismal candidates. Several evangelical Christians from Bogota, who had moved to Ibague, also became active in the Mennonite church because their particular denomination did not have a church in the city.

Last year a city-wide united evangelistic crusade was conducted in Ibague, in which the Ibague pastor served as a member of the steering committee. Through the crusade more con-



tacts were made and still other individuals from near the church began attending. On Sunday mornings there is a regular attendance of 30 to 35 adults and 15 to 20 children. Mrs. Hernandez, who has been well trained in Christian education, has organized an outstanding Sunday school program for children, young people, and adults. Regular Sunday evening services are held along with Bible study classes each Tuesday evening.

Several months ago, the Rev. Hernandez baptized eight new converts who were then received into the membership of the congregation. When twelve baptized persons become members of the new congregation, an established church will be formed. This will become a reality during 1967--the church being called, "The



Armando and Eunice with children

Christian Mennonite Church of Ibague."

The work, by the grace of God and the faithfulness of the Hernandez couple, has made significant progress in a brief period of time. The garage is now too small to accommodate the Sunday morning attendance. The next step in Ibague is very clear; a suitable property must be located and purchased, and building plans must be initiated by the beginning of 1968.

Ibague is a city of eighty thousand people, and the Mennonite church of that city feels its responsibility to proclaim the message of Christ with the help of adequate facilities.



First adult baptismal class in Ibague

#### COLOMBIAN DELEGATE TO WORLD CONFERENCE

At a meeting of the Church Council of the Mennonite Churches of Colombia, it was unanimously decided to send Mrs. Edilma Reales to the Eighth Mennonite World Conference in July.

Mrs. Reales is an active member of the Bogota church and has served for two years as a deaconess. At present she is a member of the Bogota church Building Committee.

Mrs. Reales is a graduate of the Colegio Americano of Cachipay and Bogota. She is a registered nurse now serving as a professor-nurse at the headquarters of the Colombian Red Cross. She is also studying advanced nursing at the National University in the capital city.



Colombian delegate to conference

#### STUDENT-PASTOR RETURNS TO SEMINARY

Mr. Roberto Elmassian, following one year of serving as an evangelist and student-pastor, has returned to complete his theological training at the Mennonite seminary in Montevideo, Uruguay.

Roberto was very instrumental in organizing open-air meetings in Cachipay, Anolaima, Le Mesa, and Ibague. He also served as the pastor of the Cachipay church for five months.

The Colombian churches and mission staff are thankful for the contribution made by this fine, young ministerial student.



Roberto Elmassian

## HIGHLIGHTS-YOUTH RETREAT 1967

The annual Young People's Retreat was held in Cachipay during the month of January. This year's retreat attracted a sizable number of new youth, who were not members of any evangelical church.

The main thrust of the retreat centered around the themes of Christian vocations, dating, courtship, and marriage. Through special messages, small group discussions, and separate sessions for the teen-age boys and girls, these themes were given practical applications for the lives of young Colombian Christians.

Special speakers and retreat leaders

The main speaker for the retreat was the Rev. Burt Biddulph, president of the United Colombian Seminary in Medellin, and director of the Inter-American Mission of Colombia. The Rev. Biddulph sounded the note of God's calling for every young Christian to some vocation in which Christ can be honored and served. Most of the special classes on dating and marriage were led by the Rev. John Ekizian, personal friend of Roberto Elmassan, from Buenos Aires, Argentina. The Rev. Ekizian is the pastor of the Evangelical Armenian Church of Buenos Aires.

At the close of the four-day retreat, a baptismal service was held in which six young people from the Cachipay church confessed their faith in Christ and were received into the membership of the church.

In the final evening meeting scores of young people expressed their gratitude to God for the inspiration and help received during the 1967 retreat.



Retreaters 1967

### MISSIONARY-TEACHER ARRIVES

April marks the arrival in Colombia of Miss Bertha Mae Reiff, member of the Eden Mennonite Church in Schwenksville, Pennsylvania. After studying two terms at the Spanish Language Institute in Costa Rica, she will begin her new assignment in the educational ministry of the mission.

Miss Reiff will teach in the primary school at the Colegio Americano in Cachipay. She will live with Miss Vernelle Yoder, who is the present directress of the Colegio in Cachipay, which this year has an enrollment of seventy-five students.

For the Reiff family, Bertha Mae's coming to Colombia means that two daughters are serving as missionaries, the other one being Mrs. Charles Sprunger serving in Africa. We welcome Bertha Mae as a member of the Colombian staff.



Bertha Mae and language teacher

## MAY 28 - DEDICATION DAY!

October 15, 1966, marked the beginning of the construction of the Bogota church. Sunday, May 28, will mark the day in which the new facilities will be dedicated to the glory of God.

Careful planning, an active building committee, and good weather have shortened the period of construction from an anticipated ten months to seven months.

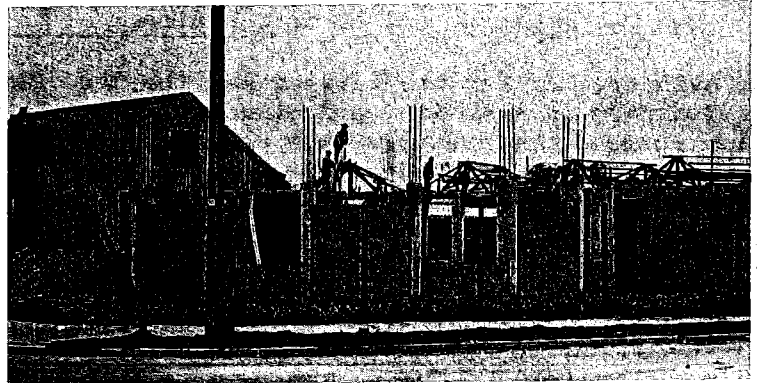
May 28 is a very significant date in the brief history of the Bogota church. On the same Sunday in May 1964, the church was organized with 27 founding members. The dedication of the new facilities will climax three years of existence.

The dedication activities will include a sacred concert by the church choir, a special communion service, baptism and reception of new members, plus the formal dedication service to be held on Sunday afternoon at 2:30 p.m.

Special speakers for the occasion will include the Rev. Andrew Shelly and the Rev. and Mrs. Gerald Stucky.



Building Committee discussing final details



Construction continues at accelerated pace

## ANOLAIMA CHURCH PLANS GROUND-BREAKING

On Sunday afternoon, June 4, the Anolaima church will take the first step toward their building program. The Rev. George Ediger, with his building committee, will break ground for a new church building, a Sunday school unit, and pastor's house.

A fine property was purchased many years ago in anticipation of a building program. The Anolaima congregation is hopeful of beginning construction during the month of June.



Ediger and Klaassen on Anolaima church property

## KANSAS COUPLE JOINS BOGOTA VS UNIT

Bogota has become "home" for John and Sandra Zenger since the beginning of January. The Zengers join the two other couples in the varied work and ministry of the recently formed Bogota VS unit.

Currently, John is studying Spanish at the University of the Andes. Sandra is teaching a full load of English language classes at the Colegio Americano in Bogota, a primary-secondary Spanish school of the Colombian Presbyterian Church.

The Zengers are in Colombia on a three-year assignment under the Board of Christian Service.



The Zengers

## PROTESTANTS MARCH IN CAPITAL CITY

The Bogota police estimated sixteen thousand, one major Colombian newspaper reported twenty thousand, but no matter the exact number the Protestant Evangelical Churches of Bogota marched from the bullfighting arena to the famous plaza of Simon Bolivar. In more than 100 years of Protestant mission efforts in Bogota, Colombia's capital city, never witnessed a mass march by Protestant Christians. A very orderly but jubilant Protestant church marched down 10th Avenue carrying Bibles and singing "Onward Christian Soldiers."



Marching down 10th Avenue in Bogota



Congregating for massed meeting



Singing in the Central Plaza



Standing on steps of capitol building

When the marchers reached the Plaza of Bolivar, a group of leading Protestant church leaders laid a floral tribute at the statue of Simon Bolivar, Colombia's great liberator. The Rev. Luis Palau, young evangelist from Argentina, expressed the gratitude of Protestant believers for the freedom to march and meet on the historic steps of the capitol building. The massed congregation sang, "How Great Thou Art," and the Colombian National Anthem.

The massed meeting and march signaled the opening of a four-night united evangelistic crusade in which almost all the Protestant churches cooperated. A united choir of 250 voices presented sacred music each evening of the crusade. A major Bogota radio station transmitted live broadcasts of the crusade meetings.

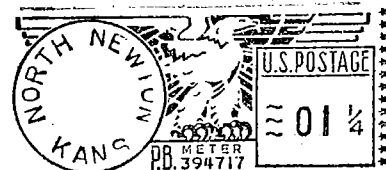
The march and meetings demonstrated at least three significant things: first, that a Protestant church does exist in Bogota and can unite to give witness to Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. Second, that a new spirit of religious liberty does exist in Colombia which permits a religious minority group to propagate its faith in public. Third, the march and meetings also gave concrete evidence of the spirit of unity that exists among the Bogota Protestant community to unite in a program of evangelism and public witness.

The Mennonite churches of Bogota, La Mesa, Cachipay, and Anolaima participated in both the march and the crusade meetings. Several members of the Bogota church sang each evening in the united crusade choir. Mrs. Marlene Habegger served as the pianist for the entire crusade. Nearly 1,000 decisions for Christ were registered during the four-night crusade. Over 7,000 attended the final meetings.

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#### GREEN EMERALDS AND THE GOSPEL



Land of the Green Emerald

It is a fact that Colombia is a country rich in natural resources. Colombia is known as the "Land of the Green Emerald," which is but one of its natural resources. The green emeralds mined in Colombia are the finest in all the world. There are three elements which are vital to the mining of green emeralds: trained personnel, tools of the trade, and finances. If a green emerald is to be mined, cut, and polished, these three elements are indispensable.

There are also spiritual resources in Colombia, but these must also be found and mined. Many Colombians are like unmined, uncut, and unpolished "spiritual green emeralds" that await the proclaiming of the gospel. If individuals are to be "mined for Christ and His church," the same three elements are essential: trained personnel, tools of the trade, and finances.

At present we have the trained personnel in the form of fine Colombian pastors, lay workers, and missionaries. These leaders have been trained to use the tools of the trade, but what is most often lacking are financial resources. Although our Colombian believers give in order to sustain the work financially, in order to advance in evangelism and church growth and outreach, the Colombian church and mission continue to count on the financial aid and assistance of North American Christians to whom God has given sixty percent of the world's wealth. Your help is needed to support the worldwide mission program of the General Conference Mennonite Church.

#### PRAISE AND PRAYER

PRAISE God for the arrival of Bertha Mae Reiff who will teach in the Colegio Americano.  
PRAISE God for the completion and dedication of the new church facilities in Bogota.  
PRAISE God for the large number of catechism candidates preparing to join our Colombian churches.  
PRAY for the important mission staff meetings with the Rev. Andrew Shelly during the month of June  
PRAY for our national Colombian teaching staff in the Colegios of La Mesa and Cachipay.

PRAY especially for George Ediger who has been stricken with virus hepatitis during March. At present George is bedfast but making good progress toward recovery. Also remember his wife, Margaret, who is carrying the responsibilities of the Anolaima church.